



Herod *A Tragedy*  
by Stephen Phillips

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To / Bella

from / Jean

Christmas. 1900.

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HEROD

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# HEROD

A TRAGEDY

BY

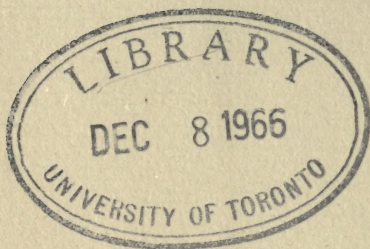
STEPHEN PHILLIPS

JOHN LANE

LONDON AND NEW YORK

1901





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TO  
HERBERT BEERBOHM TREE

IN LIFE A TRUE FRIEND, AND ON THE STAGE  
THE HEROD OF MY DREAMS  
I DEDICATE THIS TRAGEDY

THIS play is published in its present form to meet the demand which has arisen in connection with its production at Her Majesty's Theatre. The text has received such revision as was possible in the time ; but the author hopes at some future day to return to the theme.

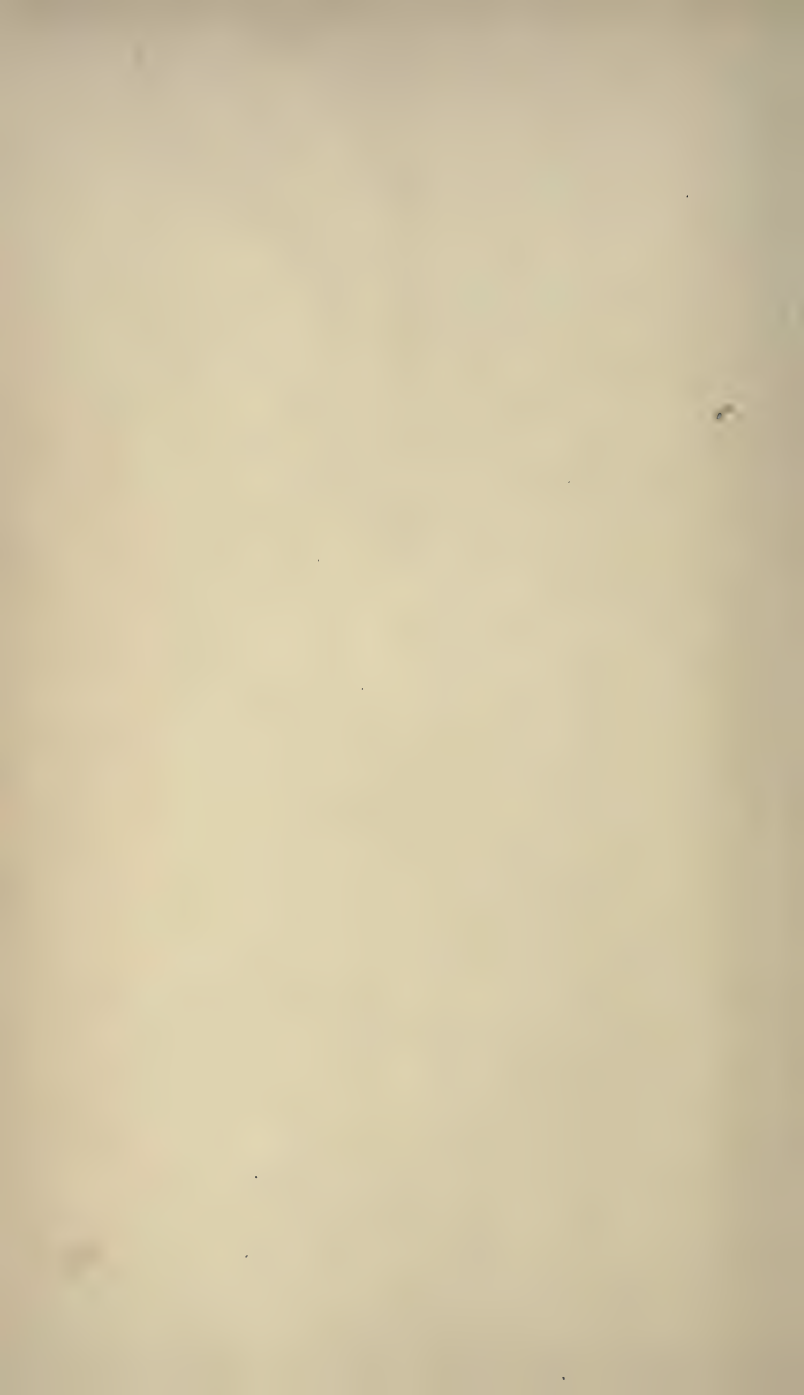


# CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY

*As produced at Her Majesty's Theatre*

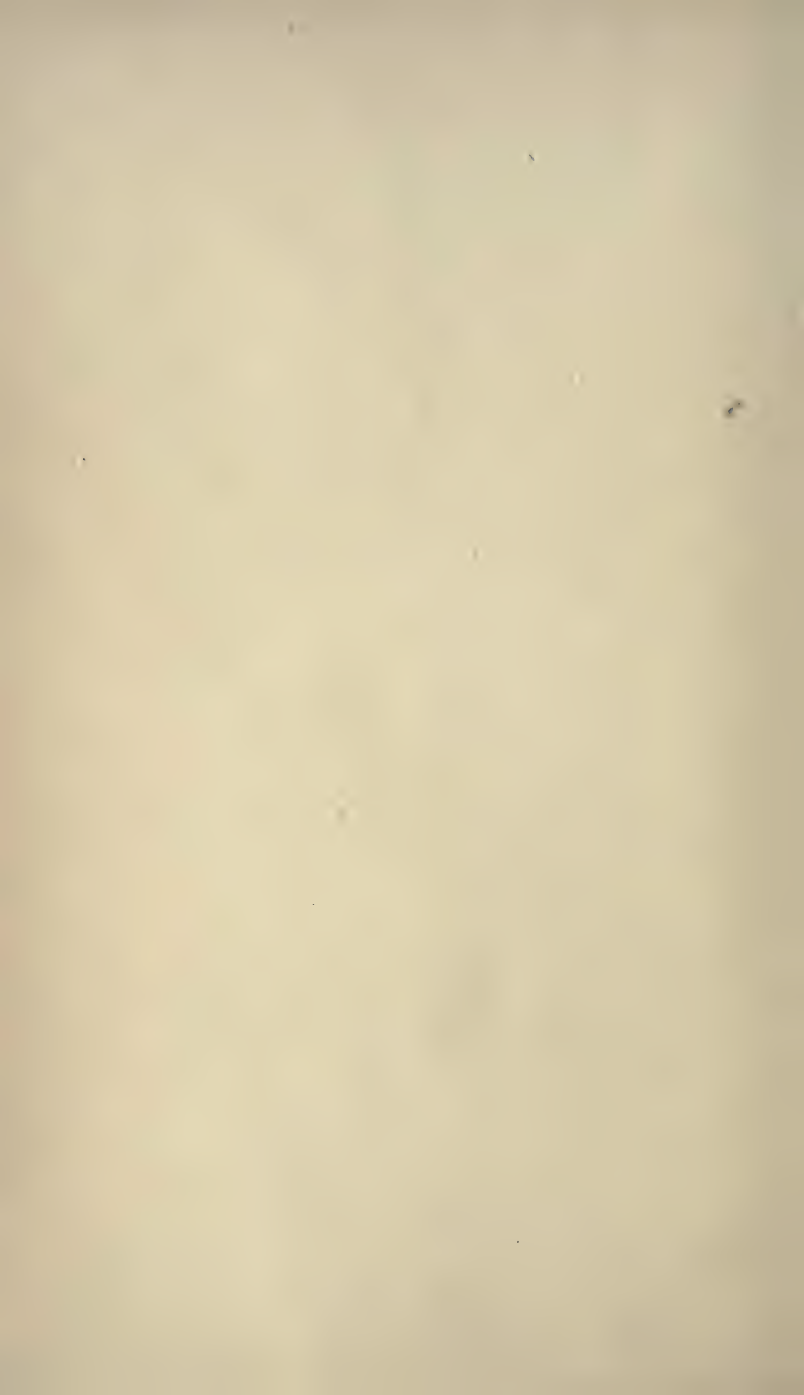
October 31 1900

HEROD	. <i>King of the Jews</i>	. MR TREE.
ARISTOBULUS	{ <i>High Priest and</i> <i>Brother of</i> <i>Mariamne</i> }	MR NORMAN THARP.
GADIAS	. <i>Chief Councillor</i>	. MR C. W. SOMERSET.
SOHEMUS	. <i>A Gaul</i>	. MR F. H. MACKLIN.
PHERORAS	. <i>Brother of Herod</i>	. MR F. PERCIVAL STEVENS.
A PRIEST	. ...	MR S. A. COOKSON.
A PHYSICIAN	. ...	MR CHARLES FULTON.
SYLLÆUS	. <i>A Blind Man</i>	. MR J. FISHER WHITE.
A CAPTAIN	. ...	MR JAMES SMYTHE.
ENVOY FROM ROME	. ...	MR C. F. COLLINGS.
CUP-BEARER	. ...	MR L'ESTRANGE.
SERVANT	. ...	MR CAVENDISH MORTON.
MARIAMNE	. { <i>Queen and Wife</i> <i>of Herod</i> }	MISS MAUD JEFFRIES.
CYPROS	. <i>Mother of Herod</i>	. MISS BATEMAN (Mrs Crowe)
BATHSHEBA	. <i>Maid to Mariamne</i>	MISS ROSALIE JACOBI.
HAGAR	. <i>An Old Woman</i>	. MISS LILLIAN MOUBREY.
JUDITH	. <i>A Lady of the Court</i>	MISS FRANCES DILLON.
SALOME	. <i>Sister of Herod</i>	. MISS ELEANOR CALHOUN.





## ACT I





## HEROD

TIME.—*Afternoon of the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles.*

SCENE.—*The great hall of audience in the Palace of HEROD at Jerusalem, festooned with garlands and harvest offerings for the Feast of Tabernacles. Through the colonnade at back is seen the sacred Hill of Jerusalem, with the Temple courts and Castle of Antonia, separated from the Palace by the Tyropæon valley. On the r. a flight of stairs ascends to a gallery, leading to the royal apartments. At the top of this, guarding a bronze door, stands SOHEMUS. GADIAS sits reading documents at foot of throne. As the Curtain rises, a faint*

*sound of acclamation is heard without.*  
SOHEMUS *goes and gazes towards Jerusalem,*  
*then resumes his guard.*

*Enter hurriedly three MESSENGERS.*

FIRST M. Is the king risen? From Samaria  
we,

Breathless, and with a burning tale to tell.

SOH. My place is here: to sentinel this door.

SECOND M. But these are tidings—

SOH. Here I stand and stir not.

THIRD M. Believe it, sir—look on this dust  
and haste.

SOH. I am a soldier, and obey.

FIRST M. But, sir—

'Tis Herod's throne—his life perhaps—this  
news—

SOH. Must wait.

FIRST M. When is there hope of audience?

SOH. The king is taking now his noon-day  
sleep,





SOH. 'Tis not in my direction. Then—

SALOME. Give way to me.

SOH. I stir not.

SALOME. I will pass.

SOH. Princess, not while I live.

SALOME. The king shall hear me.

Her arrogance, her stillness and her stare—

SOH. The king will hear no tale against the  
queen.

SALOME. Why, in the streets, along the  
public ways,

Are pointing figures, and a running taunt,

'See Herod's low-born sister!' And the children  
Are lifted upon shoulders to behold

'The Idumean woman—' Now give way.

SOH. The king will hear no tale against the  
queen.

SALOME. O, 'tis a madness, but it shall be  
cured

Now—and by me.

SOH. Princess, there is no passing.

SALOME. I am refused then. Am refused  
redress.

[*She turns and perceives GADIAS.*

Ah there, Gadias! Witness you this thing?

Witness—I am denied by my own brother.

Where is the king, then?

GADIAS. Well, he rests, no doubt.

All night he wanders through Jerusalem,

And listens in disguise the public talk,

And he resorts with priest and Pharisee,

With smithy gossips, bearers at the well,

With travellers and with feasters in the booths.

Little their talk will please him—

[*A cry of acclamation.*

SALOME. Whence that cry?

GADIAS. The multitude acclaims Aristobulus.

SALOME. Ah!

GADIAS. Well—

SALOME. I'll bear no more with Mariamne,  
Although the blood of all the Maccabees  
Runs in her veins, and we are alien,





34 Some new thing?

GADIAS.

In Samaria they plot

To crown Aristobulus.

PHER.

Is the king

'Ware of all this?

GADIAS. He is 'ware of all things—but—

PHER. Why then?

GADIAS. The woman.

PHER.

Who?

GADIAS.

Always the woman.

PHER. But how?

GADIAS. The boy Aristobulus bears

Some likeness to his sister the loved queen,

Some mole at the back of his neck or—

PHER.

Come, Gadias.

GADIAS. Your pardon—he is like to Mariamne,  
Therefore, although he may hurl Herod down,  
We may not touch him—he may grasp the  
throne;

Well—he is like to Mariamne—or

He may kill Herod; well, he is most like

To Mariamne. Now to please the queen  
He is made high-priest : Herod, to please the  
queen,  
Must raise himself a rival in this boy.

*[During this speech various COUNCIL-  
LORS, etc., have come leisurely in.  
Another cry of acclamation is heard.]*

FIRST COUN. Gadias, there is peril in that cry.

SECOND COUN. For young Aristobulus is  
the shout.

THIRD COUN. The darling of the multitude.

FIRST COUN. And sprung  
Of the old blood.

YOUNG COUN. And all behind him is  
A sense of something coming on the world,  
A crying of dead prophets from their tombs,  
A singing of dead poets from their graves.

GADIAS. I ever dread the young : well, as you  
know,  
Herod is our sole stay.

SECOND COUN. Our brain—our arm.

PHER. He, he alone postpones the Roman  
doom.

THIRD COUN. If Herod then by mutiny  
should fall—

FIRST CAPT. That moment swoop the yelling  
eagles down.

SECOND CAPT. Have those two eagles with  
the world for prey

Yet closed to talon reach?

PHER. I know not, sir.

COUN. Octavius Cæsar and Marc Antony.

GADIAS. Herod is fast bound unto Antony.

FIRST CAPT. If Cæsar then should triumph—

GADIAS. Then 'twere ill

For friends of Antony.

COUN. Herod—and us.

SECOND CAPT. But Antony's the elder  
soldier—

GADIAS. Well—

PHER. Octavius is a lad—

GADIAS. The lad fights free,



No Cleopatra hangs about his neck.

*Enter SERVANT down gallery stairs.*

SERV. [*To GADIAS.*]

The king, sir, will descend with ceremony  
To greet the new High-Priest Aristobulus.

GADIAS. And in what mood?

SERV. He hath said nothing, sir.

*[Another cry of acclamation.*

Listen, that cry. It was not for the king.

*[Music is heard from without, and grows louder as the procession of people from the Feast of Tabernacles comes in dancing and carrying wreaths of fruit and flowers, with boughs of palm, willow, and citron. Following them walk CYPROS and SALOME, and lastly MARIAMNE, leading ARISTOBULUS by the hand. As these take place by the foot of the throne, the door of the private apartments opens, and HEROD, ceremonially dressed, comes down the stairs and seats himself on the throne. There is a loud acclamation for*

ARISTOBULUS, *and a faint one  
led by GADIAS, for HEROD.*

MAR. [*Leading ARISTOBULUS before HEROD,  
who seats her on throne beside him.*]

Herod, before all these I here would thank you  
For honouring thus the Asmonæan House,  
And making thus my brother the high-priest.  
Since his ancestral office he resumes,  
We three are bound unto each other more :  
With him the rites of peace, with thee the sword,  
With me a reconciling love for both.

CH. PRIEST. O people, lo the anointed of the  
Lord ;

May God send down on him His glory of old,  
And for his sake forbear to bend the bow,  
In the day of ire and darkness, in that day.  
Lo, the High Priest of God—Aristobulus.

[*A vast shout of acclamation, taken up  
by the throng ; MARIAMNE in  
sudden delight leaves HEROD'S side,  
and embraces ARISTOBULUS.*

MAR. Brother, I glow all o'er to hear your  
name

Cried and cried out. O thou art holy, child ;  
About thee is the sound of rushing wings  
And a breathing as of angels thro' thy hair.  
Yet, brother, even now forget me not.

ARIS. O Mariamne, tell me not : I am tired.

MAR. Even in this hour remember still faint  
dawns

When you and I together slipp'd away  
To the dark fields, and cried out to each other  
At each new flower we found.

ARIS. I am a man

Now, and must put such softnesses away.

MAR. Was ever brother loved as thou art  
loved ?

ARIS. I am deaf with praises, and all dazed  
with flowers ;

Cling any to me yet ?

MAR. Yes, here and here.

ARIS. Give me that palm leaf, I will wear it so.



WOMAN. [*Advancing from the crowd.*] O  
holy, wilt thou suffer these my children  
To touch thy garment hem?

ARIS. O, yes.

[*The CHILDREN are brought forward  
and touch his robe.*]

OLD MAN. And me  
To kiss thy hands.

ARIS. My hands are worn with kisses.

OLD MAN. O thou of the old Asmonæan  
blood,  
Remember those dead priests that yet were  
kings.

[*A general shout. HEROD'S brow darkens.*]

ARIS. Their blood is thrilling in me.

[*Another shout.*]

MAR. Beautiful,  
Thy face did dim the gold of the Temple—yet—

ARIS. Well, sister.

MAR. O, let it not lure thee, child.

[*She again puts her arm round his neck.*]

ARIS. Ah, sister. Kiss me not. I am tired.

MAR. Still

Remember me. I am so wrapped in thee ;  
My love hath hovered round thee since thy birth ;  
I have suffered like a mother in my dreams  
For thee.

ARIS. But O, the raining of the blooms ;  
The cymbals and the roarings and the roses !  
I seemed to drink bright wine and run on  
flowers.

Nay, Mariamne, how should I forget thee ?

MAR. Child, I would be with thee to hold  
thee close.

ARIS. No, lean henceforth on my protecting  
arm.

MAR. Almost I could laugh at you—but 'tis  
laughter  
That dies off sudden.

CH. PRIEST. To the closing feast  
Depart, O people, now, with song and dance.

[*Exeunt all but HEROD and GADIAS.*]

HEROD. A child! Gadias, wandering night  
by night

Among the people of Jerusalem,  
I hear a whispering of some new king,  
A child that is to sit where I am sitting;  
The general boding hath ta'en hold of me.  
If this thing has been fated from the first—

GADIAS. It is the fault of dreamers to fear  
fate.

HEROD. [*Dreamily.*] And he shall charm and  
soothe, and breathe and bless,  
The roaring of war shall cease upon the  
air,  
Falling of tears and all the voices of sorrow.  
And he shall take the terror from the  
grave—

GADIAS. The malady is too old and too long  
rooted.

The earth ailed from the first; war, pestilence,  
Madness and death are not as ills that she  
Contracted, but are in her bones and blood.

HEROD. And he shall still that old sob of the  
    sea,  
And heal the unhappy fancies of the wind,  
And turn the moon from all that hopeless quest ;  
Trees without care shall blossom, and all the  
    fields  
Shall without labour unto harvest come.

GADIAS. Dangerous—labourers thrown from  
    work rebel.

HEROD. A gentle sovereign. Ah, might there  
    not be  
Some power in gentleness we dream not of ?

GADIAS. The gentle are tame birds that feed  
    the hawk.

HEROD. To overcome by other ways than  
    steel—

GADIAS. A somewhat sudden change of  
    policy.

It has not been our way ; and was not  
    when

You murdered the whole Sanhedrin ; nor when



You struck down Malchus on the Tyrian beach,  
Or bribed Mark Antony to slay—

HEROD.

Ah, no—

Tis not for us. A momentary thought  
Like a strange breeze in darkness on the  
cheek.

Still must we trample, crush, corrupt, and kill.  
And he shall be king of the Jews—

GADIAS. Perhaps Aristobulus, then?

HEROD.

Wild is the time;

Abroad, Octavius and Mark Antony,  
Like rival thunders from opposèd poles,  
Are rushing to that shock which splits the  
world.

Now Antony is grappled to my side,  
And on his victory this realm depends.

*Enter in haste three MESSENGERS followed by  
various COUNCILLORS and CAPTAINS.*

FIRST M. Lo, out of Egypt we—breathless,  
O king.

HEROD. Well—well?

FIRST M. O king—disaster.

HEROD. Speak then, speak.

SECOND M. O king, the demi-emperor of  
the world—

HEROD. Say—say.

SECOND M. O king—Mark Antony is dead.

[*General consternation.*]

HEROD. Antony dead? Antony dead? How  
slain?

THIRD M. Off Actium his fleet from Cæsar  
fled.

He, with dishonour mad, fell on his sword.

HEROD. Antony dead?

GADIAS. Now trembles all Judæa.

HEROD. My sole friend of the world, grasping  
whose hand,

I feared not Cæsar nor the roar of Rome.

Can ye not hear the legions on the wind?

Now, now—

[*Several CAPTAINS rush in.*]

CAPT. Arm—arm—and without pause.

ANOTHER.

Equip

Ships on the instant.

COUN.

Make submission straight.

PHER. Retire to the inner fort.

ANOTHER.

To Antonia.

GADIAS. Bribe Cleopatra with the balsam  
groves

Of Jericho to hold young Cæsar fast

With kisses, till the stabber find his way.

HEROD. I will do none of these. I'll go and  
meet

Octavius Cæsar.

GADIAS.

Madness.

HEROD.

If 'twere thou.

FIRST M. He makes for Syria, and must  
touch at Rhodes.

HEROD. To Rhodes I go then.

[*General surprise.*

And I go to-night.

[*Various COUNCILLORS approach HEROD  
with dissuading gestures.*

HEROD. To-night! You are dismissed. To  
you, Pheroras,  
My legions on all frontiers or within  
The walls: to you, Gadias, all the strings  
Of policy I leave: whom to corrupt  
And whom to kill, and whom to magnify:  
To you, Sohemus, I commend the queen.  
Away! Gadias, stay.

[*Exeunt SOHEMUS and PHERORAS.*

And yet to leave

Behind—

GADIAS. Ah—there my point is.

HEROD.

Mariamne.

GADIAS. O Herod, others must you leave  
behind.

Aristobulus—

HEROD.

Ah—

GADIAS.

You go, and leave him.

Brain of the east; by you we stand or  
fall;

You are Judæa, and in this large thought



No single life is rich, not mine, not his.  
This morn three fellows from Samaria—  
A plot to crown him, and to have your life.

HEROD. What messenger can tell me a new  
thing?

GADIAS. And knowing this, you leave that  
seed of peril—

HEROD. But Mariamne loves him so.

GADIAS. Most plain  
To all—indeed it seemed that—pardon.

HEROD. Cease.

And he is like to her about the brow—  
I strike at Mariamne, striking him,  
Perhaps even at myself; perhaps myself.

GADIAS. Then if because he hath her face,  
her voice—

HEROD. Ah, hath he not?

GADIAS. A trick, perhaps.

HEROD. A trick!

One could not get by heart that sweetness, not  
From noon-foam of the Mediterranean



*[Earnestly and privately to HEROD  
before going.]*

‘Still must we trample, crush, corrupt, and kill?’

*[Exit GADIAS. Murmurs outside.]*

HEROD. Sohemus, in the midst of this I go  
And leave behind Aristobulus—well,  
I have preferred you, lifted you on high.

SOH. Herod, I am your slave, your dog.

HEROD. Well then,  
If I should have a need of you. But how?  
When I shall put this ring upon your finger,  
Then one must be removed for the State’s  
welfare.

*Enter SERVANT.*

SERV. O king! the Prince Aristobulus asks  
To say farewell to you.

*Enter ARISTOBULUS.*

ARIS. Brother, I come  
To say farewell to you. I go to cool me  
Outside the walls, and feared you should be gone  
When I returned.

HEROD. [*Going to touch his head, but cannot.*]  
Farewell, Aristobulus.

ARIS. [*Lightly.*] And, sir, you leave the city  
in strong hands.  
I have grown up in a day. Did you not hear  
The acclamations as I waded hither  
Knee-deep in flowers? You go then with less  
fear—

And Mariamne—

HEROD. Cease. Then whither go you?

ARIS. To bathe.

HEROD. To bathe? [*Looks at SOHEMUS, who starts.*]

ARIS. Yonder in the great pool.

HEROD. And are you to deep waters used?

ARIS. O, yes.

HEROD. You know the pool well?

ARIS. O, from side to side.

HEROD. Yet are there no entangling reeds  
that drag

Downward?



ARIS. I fear them not. Ah, for the  
plunge,  
The upward burst, and the long dart through  
waters.

HEROD. Go you alone?

ARIS. O, yes.

HEROD. Were it not well  
Some other went with you—Sohemus here?

ARIS. I shall be glad of him.

HEROD. Stay not too long.

ARIS. Farewell then, Herod.

HEROD. I have said it.

ARIS. So?

It may be that I shall return in time.  
But I so love the waters, I may linger  
Floating upon my back thus, and my face  
Skyward, and you depart not seeing me ;  
So now farewell !

Will you not look at me?

HEROD. Farewell again.

[*Exit* ARISTOBULUS, *slowly*. SOHEMUS

*starts forward.* HEROD *puts the ring on his finger.*

SOH. O king!

[HEROD *points meaningly to SOHEMUS to follow* ARIS.

[*Exit* SOHEMUS.

HEROD. He hath her eyes.

Thou art too like to Mariamne—ah!

*Enter ATTENDANT from back.*

ATTEND. O king! the queen would have you go to her.

HEROD. The queen? Ah, no. Not yet—not on the instant.

Say I will come at dusking, ere I go.

No, no; I cannot look on thee so soon.

I have struck him down, and fear is come on me;

Yet I ne'er feared before; not when I slew

The assembled Sanhedrin. Why do I tremble?

Not that I have contrived this murder, this

Unshunnable and necessary act.

Then why this apprehension mystical,

This beaded forehead, and this quailing flesh?  
Dimly I dread lest having struck this blow  
Of my free-will, I by this very act  
Have signed and pledged me to a second blow  
Against my will. What if the powers permit  
The doing of that deed which serves us now;  
Then of that very deed do make a spur  
To drive us to some act that we abhor?  
The first step is with us; then all the road,  
The long road is with Fate. O horrible!  
If he being dead demand another death.

[ *Walks backwards into MARIAMNE'S arms,  
she having entered softly behind him.*

MAR. You are in some peril, Herod?

HEROD. I? No—no.

MAR. But see, great drops have gathered on  
your brow.

HEROD. I am well now.

MAR. Then come—for the first time  
You have deferred me—come—you go to-night,  
Our love is at its noon—then be with me.

*[They slowly ascend the gallery steps.  
Half-way up he makes as if to  
descend.]*

HEROD. I have a thing to do, and on the instant.

MAR. *[Putting her arm about him.]* 'Tis not of such import.

HEROD. The pool!

MAR. Come, come.

*[They go off together. Music. Pause.  
The sky darkens.]*

*[Various WOMEN and BATHSHEBA  
come slowly on in the gallery above.  
A tinkling sound rises up from  
the city. First a WOMAN enters,  
fanning herself.]*

BATH. A breeze, a breeze. Did you not feel it?

WOMAN. Yes.

But when again?

ANOTHER. I droop.



ANOTHER. I faint.

ANOTHER. O, when?

ANOTHER. Stand from me. Air is coming—  
ah!

ANOTHER. At last.

ANOTHER. Delicious.

ANOTHER. There is mercy from the West.

BATH. Slowly it lifts my hair.

ANOTHER. Listen, the trees.

WOMAN. The low long 'Ah' of foliage.

ANOTHER. And a star.

BATH. O breathing of balsam and of citron  
groves

A moment!

ANOTHER. Myrtle then.

ANOTHER. And then a waft  
Of cassia—

ANOTHER. And a wandering cedar scent.

ANOTHER. Now one can breathe. Come out  
into the cool.

[*Music. Exeunt ALL but BATHSHEBA.*

BATH. Above, star after star; in the city  
beneath

Lamp after lamp. Oh! would I were down  
there?

Now strings are touched, and they begin to dance.  
Oh, would I were down there? How sweet the  
night!

[*Exit.*

*Enter CYPROS and SALOME.*

SALOME. No; I'll not stay.

CYPROS. A little patience, child.

SALOME. I hate her, mother.

CYPROS. Do I love her?

SALOME. Time

Hath taken the sting from you.

CYPROS. I do not waste it,

And when I dart it forth I kill, not prick.

SALOME. If you can patiently support—

CYPROS. I can,

And patiently prepare revenge.

SALOME. But how?

CYPROS. Child, I foresee, though dimly, a  
great vengeance.

SALOME. If I saw that—

CYPROS. Remember Herod's love—  
That madness, easy to be worked upon—  
For Mariamne. Then her love, how deep  
For young Aristobulus.

SALOME. Yet how, how?

CYPROS. Still clearer then? Remember  
Herod's rage  
At acclamations on her brother heaped;  
Remember the set teeth and veiled glare.

SALOME. Oh—I begin to see.

CYPROS. No more is ripe.  
I keep this phial here close to my heart.  
Did not the great astrologer foretell  
'Herod shall famous be o'er all the world,  
But he shall kill that thing which most he loves.'  
I feared then; but not now.

SALOME. No—we are safe.

CYPROS. Then will you leave the palace?

SALOME. No ; I'll stay  
Upon the chance ; yet would I tear her beauty  
Thus with my nails.

CYPROS. You speak as might a girl,  
But I will have—

SALOME. What—what ?

CYPROS. Her life ; no less ;  
I'll send her to that democratic doom ;  
Down to the levelling grave ; and she shall die—  
Not at our hands.

SALOME. Who then shall do this thing ?  
Speak ; who ?

CYPROS. Wait : wait, I say, and watch.

[*Exeunt* CYPROS and SALOME.]

HEROD. That star is languorous with divine  
excess !

MAR. O world of wearied passion dimly  
bright !

HEROD. Now the armed man doth lay his  
armour by,  
And now the husband hasteth to the wife.

MAR. The brother to the sister maketh home.

HEROD. Now cometh the old lion from the  
pool.

MAR. And the young lion having drunk  
enough—

But, Herod, you are going into peril.

HEROD. The peril hath a glitter for thy sake.

*[Comes down steps.]*

MAR. Ah—must you go?

HEROD. To match myself with Rome.

Great difficulties bring delight to me.

MAR. And most for this I love you, and  
have loved,

That when you wooed, behind you cities  
crashed ;

Those eyes that dimmed for me flamed in the  
breach,

And you were scorched and scarred and dressed  
in spoils,

Magnificent in livery of ruin.

You swept denial off and all delay,



You rushed on me like fire, and a wind drove  
you.

Thou who didst never fear, Herod, my Herod,  
Now clasp me close as thou didst clasp me  
then,

When like a hundred lightnings brands up-  
sprung

In the night sudden. Then did you laugh out  
And whirled me like a god through the dark away.

HEROD. How shall I go now ?

MAR. I'd not have you stay.  
For could you stay you were no more my  
Herod.

How bright the towered world !

HEROD. The towered world ;  
And we, we two will grasp it, we will burst  
Out of the East unto the setting sun.

MAR. Thou art a man—

HEROD. With thee will be a god ;  
Now stand we on the hill in red sunrise.

MAR. Now hand in hand into the morning.

HEROD.

Ever

Upward and upward—ever hand in hand ;  
Shall nothing stay thy love, Mariamne, nothing ?  
Nothing shall stay it—nothing ?

MAR.

No—unless—

HEROD. What—what ?

MAR.

I cannot say—but—

HEROD.

Mariamne,

Tell me that nothing—

MAR.

Nothing from outside—

HEROD. How then ?

MAR.

Why speak of what shall never be ?

Pull back my head, and look down in my  
eyes,

Herod, my Herod, such a love as grows

For you within me, it could never die.

HEROD. Ah !

MAR. And I take a kind of maiden pleasure

In hushing what I feel will be so wild,

In staying what I know shall be so swift ;

This love could never fade.

HEROD. O eyes of dew !

MAR. Not time, absence, or age ever could  
touch it.

HEROD. O liquid language of Eternity !

MAR. Only—

HEROD. You start up and you lay both  
hands

Thus on my shoulder, and your eyes are full.

Close to my heart !

MAR. No—stand so far from me.

HEROD. Utter what is behind.

MAR. Yet might you kill it.

HEROD. Say—

MAR. In a night murder it—in a moment ;  
It is so brave you would not hear a cry,  
But—

HEROD. If I did such murder then—

MAR. O, then  
You'd stoop and lift a dead face up to you,  
And pull me out from reeds like one just  
drowned,

More dead than those who die ; and I should  
move,

Go here and there, and words would fall from  
me.

But, ah—you'd touch but an embalmèd thing.

Do nothing, Herod, that shall hurt my soul.

*[A faint sound of wailing is heard in  
the distance.]*

Listen !

HEROD. O Mariamne !

MAR. Listen !

HEROD. What ?

MAR. Be still ; did you not hear it ? Nearer  
now.

HEROD. What—what ?

MAR. A wailing ! And again you start  
As once this noontide.

HEROD. Mariamne, say  
That nothing ever shall divide us two.

MAR. Again ! What hath been found ?

HEROD. Ah ; close to me.





MAR. O! [*Recovers herself slowly and  
with effort, then speaks as  
in stony bewilderment.*]

Sirs, set the litter here. I'll sit by it.

And leave me, all of you.

HEROD.

But I?

MAR.

O, you;

You are my husband, stay.

[*Exeunt all but HEROD and MARIAMNE.*]

HEROD. Mariamne, there's no help—we can  
but give

Honour, and he in such magnificence

Shall lie—Mariamne, hear you?—that his tomb

Shall with its golden glory lure strange sails.

Will you not turn ever so little? There

Aloe and cinnamon and cassia balm

Shall breathe, and mighty poets in his praise

Shall make their verse in funeral thunders roll,

Or wail as women or wind out of the sea.

A word now—but a whisper.

*Re-enter* SOHEMUS.

SOH. All things wait.  
Night rushes on us.

HEROD. Now into your hands  
I do commend the queen. Mariamne, I  
Am going into peril—say farewell.

MAR. [*Rising.*] I stand between the living  
and the dead.

[*Moving away.*]

HEROD. For the last time—your lips for the  
last time.

MAR. Oh, take them, Herod, but—

HEROD. What have I done?  
If she—

[*A trumpet.*]

SOH. Away, O king, the trumpet calls.

HEROD. My bugle from the hill shall say  
farewell.

Hither from that dead body. Hither. I  
grow

Even jealous of the dead. Hither! Ah, no;  
Farewell, farewell—for Rhodes.

[HEROD *rushes off, attended by* SOHEMUS.

MARIAMNE, *remaining by the litter, throws herself on the body, and is shaken by sobs for some time before she speaks.*

MAR. This morn all flushed with music and  
with roses,

This eve all silent and so lily-pale,

O swift and sudden change—

[*Pause: then with the dawn of a gradual terrible suspicion.*

Aha! and perhaps

That very brightness brought about this gloom.

I must not think—imagine it: and yet

Twice Herod started, and his brow was damp:

‘Mariamne, say that nothing shall divide us,

Nothing:’ O was it this thing that he feared?

*Re-enter* SOHEMUS. MARIAMNE, *still kneeling, turns and gazes piercingly on him.*

SOH. [*To himself.*] She overcomes me like  
that starry arch

I wondered at in boyhood 'mid the forest,  
And paused with poised javelin in the moon-  
beams. [To MARIAMNE.

O queen, why are your eyes so fixed on me?  
What is it I shall do? Shall I fetch hither  
Bathsheba? Still your eyes between the  
candles

Burn through me. What then would you have  
me do?

MAR. Come hither and stand near to me,  
Sohemus.

[SOHEMUS comes to her side.

And he was a strong swimmer yet was drowned.

SOH. The entangling reeds.

MAR. Lay upon mine your hand.

SOH. O queen, I tremble at your touch.

MAR. This morn

The people cried out that he should be king.

SOH. It was a madness.

MAR. Look into my eyes.

Will you not? Kings have gazed in them.

SOH. O queen !

I am dazed ; thy beauty takes away my life  
And being.

MAR. Herod goes and leaves behind—

SOH. 'Tis very still.

MAR. You have been true to Herod ?

SOH. O until death.

MAR. Yes, unto death. Sohemus,  
Start not away.

SOH. O queen, I cannot stir.  
I am held as in a dream.

MAR. Sohemus, stay.  
Was not this dying fortunate for Herod ?  
Came it not just upon the time ? O speak,  
And fear not — kings must not be lightly  
blamed,

No, nor king's instruments. Now, in your ear,  
Was not this drowning fortunate for Herod ?

SOH. O, kill me, but command me not to  
speak.

MAR. A necessary death then. Was it so ?



SOH. What shall I say ?

MAR.                               The truth. I know it now.  
This child was murdered.

SOH.                               Murdered ?

MAR.                               They came round  
And held him under, and great bubbles rose.  
Now by this beauty can you answer No ?

SOH. I—I—I cannot.

MAR.                               Go.

[Exit SOHEMUS.

[MARIAMNE turns again to the litter.

*At this moment the faint sound of  
a bugle is heard far off, and in the  
distance the torches of HEROD'S  
retinue are seen moving over a  
hill. MARIAMNE turns.*

Ah, Herod, Herod !

## ACT II



SCENE.—*The hall of audience in HEROD'S palace as before, but ungarlanded; on various points of vantage without are SENTINELS watching for the arrival of HEROD.*

*Enter SOHEMUS meeting GADIAS.*

GADIAS. No sight yet of the king?

SOH. [*Calling up.*]                      The king in sight?

SENT. Nothing!

SECOND S.                      Nothing!

GADIAS.                      And never will be sight.

SOH. Gadias!

GADIAS.                      Young Octavius is no fool!

Herod hath walked into Octavius's arms.

SOH. I trust 'tis not so.

GADIAS.                      Yes, for every hour

The murmuring of the people louder grows.

FIRST S. A cloud of dust!

SECOND S. At last!

FIRST S. See you—

SECOND S. Ah, there.

GADIAS. Where is the queen?

SOH. Returned from dropping blooms  
Upon the grave of young Aristobulus.

GADIAS. These passings 'twixt the palace and  
the tomb

Madden the multitude! They crane their necks,  
Remembering her brother in her face.

Last morn there followed her a hoarse uproar.

SOH. When Herod shall—

GADIAS. *If* Herod shall—

SOH. Return—

GADIAS. Here's his first task; in fear of  
mutiny,

Of mutiny by Mariamne roused,  
To interdict these visits to the tomb.

And it shall be my business that he do so.

[*Exit* GADIAS.]



FIRST S. A solitary horseman—

SECOND S. No—

FIRST S. Indeed

It is. A furious and a lonely rider.

*Enter MARIAMNE, behind, clothed in black.*

MAR. [*To SOHEMUS.*] Then Herod left direction that if death

O'ertook him, I too should that moment die.

SOH. O queen, I have told unto your beauty what

No torture could have wrung, and have betrayed My master's secrets.

FIRST S. Ah! A golden breastplate!

SECOND S. It cannot be.

FIRST S. Yet look! O burning gold!

SOH. This was the very madness of his love!

How could he face that fear lest you should walk

Behind Octavius's high-triumphing car?

MAR. I might  
Have seen a grandeur in this thought,  
Even magnificence of flattery,  
Once, but not now. The dead boy makes him  
vile

In this thing as in all things. Was not this  
The tiger's act, beast fury?

FIRST S. It is he!

SECOND S. Impossible!

FIRST S. 'Tis he! Herod—the king!

*Enter GADIAS and the Court, hastily.*

SOH. Said you the king?

FIRST S. The king, sir, all alone!

SECOND S. Up on my shoulder there—see,  
see the king!

A CHILD. Show me! Show me!

ANOTHER. But where, O where?

ANOTHER. O look!

FIRST S. Hark, how he thunders!

SECOND S. White with foam the horse.

SOH. He leaps down, and his armour jangles  
loud.

ATTEND. The king, the king, he is rushing  
in alone.

FIRST S. He clangs along the corridors—

SECOND S. And burns

From pillar to pillar like fire before the wind.

HEROD. [*Without.*] Mariamne! Mariamne!  
Mariamne!

[HEROD *rushes in, while all present  
make obeisance. MARIAMNE alone  
remains standing. He makes his  
way to her and kisses her hand.*

GADIAS. O king, what tidings?

PHER. What success?

FIRST C. What news?

HEROD. O unimagined! I will pour it  
forth!

Mariamne, I pursued and came on Cæsar—

A face young and yet wary I came in

Amid the courtiers, and omitted nothing

Of royalty but this my diadem—  
Mariamne, do you hear?—I did not cringe,  
But stood and looked on him as man on man,  
As king on king. Then I spoke out—I mourned  
Dead Antony with frankness as my friend—  
Mariamne, hear you?—you shall glow at this—  
And unto Cæsar proffered the same aid  
I gave to Antony. ‘Judge me,’ I cried,  
‘By what I was to him—to you I’ll be  
No worse a friend—You’ll say ’tis policy—  
I’ll not deny it; but ’tis durable;  
I am your friend by sea, by land henceforth,  
If you will have me so.’ Then, Mariamne,  
He looked long on me—then without a word

*[Takes her hand.]*

Gave me his hand, and bade me sit by him,  
We sat together—do you listen?—and  
He called for wine: ‘I drink to my friend  
Herod

And to his Mariamne.’

MAR. *[Groaning.]*

Ah!

*[On the groan he falls away from her, then looks in her face. With a gesture he dismisses the Court, who disperse, whispering. HEROD and MARIAMNE are left alone. He moves to embrace her with passion, but she repels him.]*

MAR. I am come  
From young Aristobulus that was murdered.

HEROD. Murdered !

MAR. Or taken as we take a dog  
And strangled in that pool whose reeds I hear  
Sighing within my ears until I die.

You like a tiger purred about me : O !

Your part it was to soothe and hush me while  
He gasped beneath their hands—your hands—

O yes,

You were not near, 'twas yours to kiss and lie—  
But none the less your hands were round his  
throat,

O liar !



HEROD. Mariamne!

MAR. You forest beast!

HEROD. Mariamne!

MAR. Back, and in the jungle burn  
Whence you did leap out at my brother's throat.  
Can you deny your part in this? O subtle!  
Half suitor and half strangler, with one arm  
About the sister's neck, the other hand  
About the brother's throat!

HEROD. I'll not endure—

MAR. Can you deny you slew Aristobulus?  
Look in my eyes; speak truth if still 'tis in  
you.

HEROD. I'll not deny my part in the boy's  
death.

MAR. Will you weep now? Strive, and the  
tears will come.

HEROD. 'Twas I—I, Herod—who com-  
manded it.

MAR. Commanded!

HEROD. Yes, and would again command.

MAR. You! You—a sudden thing sprung up  
in the night—

To dip your hands in our most ancient blood!  
That he should perish by an Idumean!

HEROD. I stand where I have climbed, and  
by your side

I could not leave him—'twas not for myself  
I struck, but for the State—'twas for Judæa!  
And for the throne—*your* throne—*your* throne—

MAR. O glib!

The assassin first, and now the orator!

HEROD. I'll burn this bitterness away!

MAR. I am grown

Listless to all concerning you.

HEROD. [*Groaning.*] Ah—ah!

MAR. Herod, because I once did love you so—  
How long since is it? — And because that  
love

With time had grown much greater, now I  
speak.

Even the red misery of my brother's murder,

That extreme pang, is pale beside this loss,  
This drying up within me of my soul.

HEROD. O madness !

MAR. You have stopped my life, and ended  
My very being in a moment. Here

[*Rising slowly.*

I stand and look on you who were my husband—

HEROD. [*Fiercely embraces her.*] And still, in  
spite of all.

MAR.

No, never more !

Herod, that love I did conceive for you,  
And from you, it was even as a child—  
More dear, indeed, than any child of flesh,  
For all its blood was as a colour of dreams,  
And it was veined with visions delicate.  
Then came a sudden labour ere my time—  
Terrible travail—and I bring it forth,  
Dead, dead. And here I lay it at your feet.

HEROD. I'll break this barrier down as I have  
others.

MAR. Never—never !

HEROD.                    When first I wooed, was I  
Not blood-stained?

MAR. Not with blood of his !

HEROD. O, still  
You shall forget him. He is dead, and I  
Live still, and glow, and sigh, and burn for you.

MAR. Almost I am moved to laughter at that  
passion  
Which once could sway and thrill me to the  
bone.

Terrible when we laugh at what we loved !

HEROD. My brain, my brain, I shall go mad !  
One kiss !

MAR. Never !

HEROD.            One touch !

MAR. No more!

HEROD. One word

MAR. Farewell!

HEROD. You will go from me?

MAR.                                No, I'll move about  
The palace. You shall have no scorn from me;

My love is dead, but I am still a queen ;  
Only, I must not be with you alone.

HEROD. Where's now the boast, the glory, O  
where now ?

What was this triumph but in the telling  
of it

To you ! And what this victory but to pour it  
Into your ears ! I had imagined all

Meetings but this—this only I foresaw not.

Here I disband my legions ; I arise,

And spill the wine of glory on the ground ;

I turn my face into the night. And yet

Why am I bowed thus—I that am Herod ?

Come,

I'll take you in my arms. I'll have your lips

By force, and chain your body up to me ;

I am denied your soul, but I will slake

This thirst of the flesh, and drink your beauty  
deep !

MAR. [*Repulsing him.*] I'll not endure your  
touch ! Your hands are curved



From that fell throttle. Now stretch out your  
arms ;

What is between us ? It is more than air.

[*Wildly.*] I tell you, Herod, that your arm but  
then

Passed through the dead boy that now stands  
between us.

[*Passes up steps with a long, shuddering  
cry of horror.*]

HEROD. Mariamne, leave me not thus,  
Mariamne !

[*Exit* MARIAMNE.]

Aristobulus, art thou satisfied ?

Oh ! since my birth I have lived in fierce  
contrast,

For ever half in lightning, half in gloom :

The brighter still the public brilliance glows,

The deeper falls this darkness of the hearth.

Never the tranquil, uneventful warmth

Where other men like creatures bask and browse,

The metal of my mind attracts the tempest.

*Enter GADIAS.*

Gadiaz, is there any thirst like this?  
Or any hunger like unto this hunger?  
I am denied her lips, her touch.

GADIAS. I came  
To speak on graver matters.

HEROD. Graver! Why?

GADIAS. The queen—

HEROD. 'Tis her I speak of.

GADIAS. In your absence—

HEROD. What? What?

GADIAS. Hath visited continually  
The tomb of young Aristobulus.

HEROD. Why,  
What need of her to pace those yards of  
earth?

Her spirit standeth by his tomb for ever.

GADIAS. There's peril in this going to and fro.

HEROD. Think you if I forbade her that with  
time

The image of this boy might grow more dim?

GADIAS. O king, the matter is more grave.

The people

Assemble now to see her pass. They whisper,  
Then come to sullen threats. And yesterday  
Rose up behind her a long, hoarse uproar.

HEROD. To have once possessed, and then to  
be debarred!

GADIAS. The Pharisees are fanning this  
chance flame.

HEROD. Now when I have returned in a fond  
glory—

*Enter CYPROS and SALOME behind.*

GADIAS. Pardon, O king, these goings to the  
tomb

Must be forbidden!

HEROD. Aching with great news.

GADIAS. Your pardon, but the people—

HEROD. Why, all this

Concerns me not.

GADIAS. O king!

HEROD. To me the people,  
My mother, sister, you—all these are nothing—

GADIAS. Well—

HEROD. Speak of Mariamne, how to win her  
back.

GADIAS. You will take some measure to  
suppress—

HEROD. Suppress? No, but to kindle what  
is quenched.

[GADIAS *motions to* CYPROS *and*  
SALOME *with despairing gesture.*

GADIAS. I will return at some more pros-  
perous moment.

[*Exit* GADIAS. CYPROS *and* SALOME  
*come down.*

CYPROS. You waved us off. We with the  
crowd were banished,  
But now that you have spoken with Mariamne  
Your mother and your sister may perhaps  
Have leave—

HEROD. I will not have your kiss—or hers !  
I am exiled from Mariamne's lips.

SALOME. Why, would she not—

HEROD. When I rushed in, she rose  
Like a black pine out of the bending wheat.

CYPROS. Doth she deny you ?

HEROD. Utterly !

SALOME. Yet why ?

HEROD. Because I killed Aristobulus.

SALOME. Oh !

CYPROS. Is this the sole cause ?

HEROD. Why, what other ?

CYPROS. Herod,  
Men I well know that you can trample down,  
Or flatter or deceive—women you know not.

HEROD. Well—well—

CYPROS. And you suppose this the  
sole cause ?

HEROD. What mean you ?

CYPROS. At the least I'll fend and watch  
Over you.





CYPROS. And then most capable of dangerous  
act.

SALOME. How? How?

CYPROS. The queen is wont about this hour  
To bring his posset to the king, which she  
Prepares with her own hands. Now if a moment  
I could distil this poison in the cup,  
Then warn him not to drink!

SALOME. Still to and fro  
He paces, making the vast room a cage.

*[Pause, moves up steps, and listens,  
kneeling.]*

Still pacing up and down, and to and fro,  
And now a sudden pause. And now again,  
Like a stung creature, fitfully resumes.

*Enter CUP-BEARER, with a cup of wine.*

CYPROS. Ah, whither do you take that cup?

CUP-B. I take it

In to the king.

CYPROS. But the queen takes the cup.

CUP-B. To-day she will not take it.

CYPROS. Give it me.

[CUP-BEARER *comes over and hands her the cup.* CYPROS *smells it.*

The queen prepared this cup with her own hands?

CUP-B. The queen prepared the cup with her own hands.

[*As he bows low, CYPROS drops in the poison. As he looks up again, she again smells the wine.*

CYPROS. Does it not seem the wine has a strange smell?

[*Gives cup to CUP-BEARER.*

SALOME. Most strange.

CYPROS. Or is it fancy?

CUP-B. A strange smell!

CYPROS. Were it not better then to warn the king

Before he drinks it?

CUP-B. I will warn the king.

[*Exit up steps.*

CYPROS. Now, Herod being warned, will  
instantly

Summon the queen and ask of her to drink ;  
This is his mood. If she refuse, he'll deem  
She hath put poison in with her own hands.

SALOME. And if she drink it ?

CYPROS. Then we see her fall—  
For it is deadly—and die upon the instant.  
So either way—

[*Cry from HEROD within.*

SALOME. A cry !

CYPROS. He is stung to madness.

SALOME. Or wounded, by his voice.

*Enter HEROD, in grim silence, with the*

CUP-BEARER.

HEROD. [*To ATTENDANT.*] Summon the  
queen,

Pheroras, and Gadias, and Sohemus.

[*A pause, during which enter PHERORAS,  
SOHEMUS and GADIAS.*

[*HEROD and CUP-BEARER stand*

*motionless. Enter MARIAMNE, and stands with back to door at top of steps, where she remains throughout following action.*

HEROD. Did you prepare this cup with your own hands?

MAR. With my own hands as is my custom.

HEROD. Yet

You did not bring it me as is your custom.

MAR. I chose to send it.

HEROD. As it chanced, my mother  
And sister intercepted the cup-bearer.

CYPROS. I had sworn to guard you, Herod.

HEROD. And they drew  
A strange smell from the wine. Now drink it!  
Drink.

MAR. [*Giving her the cup.*] Is this a second  
treachery? I know not.

[*Looks towards CYPROS and SALOME,  
and from them back to HEROD.*

He who could drown can poison.

HEROD.

Drink it—or—

MAR. I am so weary, I will drink it, and  
If it is mortal, then I go at once  
Down to Aristobulus.

Now farewell!

Jerusalem, city of God, farewell,  
My cradle first, my home, and now my grave,  
For I, the last of all the Maccabees,  
I, the lone daughter of that holy line,  
I perish without fear and without cry :  
For a doom is come upon us, and an ending.  
Brother, I drink and hasten down to you.

*[As she puts the cup to her lips, HEROD  
dashes it down.]*

HEROD. Ah, no! though you prepared this  
for my death,  
I cannot see you drink it.

Mariamne,

Now, even now—

MAR. *[Pointing to the spilt wine.]* Between us  
a red stream.



*[Angry shouts are heard from the city.]*

PHERORAS and SOHEMUS go out.

CYPROS. What is that sound ?

GADIAS. *[Listening.]* It was an angry sound.

*Enter an* OFFICER OF THE GUARD.

OFFICER. Your pardon, but our captain,  
where is he ?

SALOME. What is the danger, then ?

*[Exit* OFFICER.

CYPROS. What does this mean ?

*Crash is heard at the gates. PHERORAS enters.*

PHER. They have shattered down the outer  
gate.

CYPROS. They ? Who ?

PHER. The mob, by Mariamne's public grief  
To fury urged. They are beating at the  
palace.

SALOME. They are fighting.

CYPROS. There are groans and sudden falls.

PHER. Sohemus falls—he is wounded—they'll  
break through.

HEROD. [*To PHERORAS.*] Call reinforcements  
from the citadel,

So that they steal in and surround the mob.

Meanwhile, I will detain them in some speech.

When you are ready, let the trumpet sound.

[*Exit PHERORAS.*

[*HEROD'S guards are now forced back  
into the Hall, some falling. A MOB  
of political plotters, priests, and  
populace swarms in with stones,  
staves and chance weapons, blind  
SYLLÆUS in front. HEROD speaks  
from the stairs.*

Stand out, the chief of you, and answer me.

[*SEVERAL then stand out.*

The cause why you have broke into the palace.

SYLL. Herod, these sightless eyes can yet  
behold

The blood on you of young Aristobulus.

[*A murmur.*

It is so bright, it dazzles even the blind.

And near to you his sister flaming stands ;  
Her wrongs, her injuries we will avenge.  
Can you deny that you—you—struck him down ?

HEROD. I struck him down ! And did he  
live again,  
Again I'd strike him down. And any other  
That's in my path I'll set my foot upon.

*[A murmur which swells into a roar.]*

Why, why, then ? Because Herod is Judæa ;  
I am your bulwark and your bastion ; I,  
Herod alone.

A MAN. You have sold us to the Roman.

*[Cries of 'Yes, yes.']*

A MAN. Antony's dead !

ANOTHER. And Cæsar lives.

ANOTHER. You chose  
The wrong.

HEROD. 'Tis true that Antony's dead.  
'Tis true.

*[Murmurs.]*

That Cæsar lives. And I this very day

Have come from grasping Cæsar's hand, and  
him

I now have grappled to my side as once  
I grappled Antony. I have sold you to the  
Roman ?

Now hearken with what gifts I come from Rome.  
Henceforward in all cities which Rome sways,  
Freedom to each Jew by our ancient law,

*[Movements and murmurs of satisfaction  
checked by a gesture from HEROD.]*

So long as I reign o'er you and my heirs.  
Then leave to adore the God of Israel—

*[Renewed murmurs of gratitude, again  
checked by HEROD.]*

So long as I reign o'er you and my heirs.  
Last, in all cities under Roman rule,  
The heavy hand of persecution  
Upon our people shall be lifted up  
And all our burdens lightened from henceforth,  
*[Applause.]*

So long as I reign o'er you and my heirs.

Some other cause then? Stand you out and speak.

A PRIEST. You would destroy the Temple.

HEROD. But to build

A vaster Temple and more glorious.

This task have I foreseen and have prepared ;

And now I bid you on the instant choose

A thousand priests to work in metal and ore

Until this mightier Temple shall arise.

Till then no stone of the old sanctuary

Shall be removed. To priests and priests alone

I give the charge—I am not worthy of it.

I will enrol a thousand priests to-day.

*[Murmurs of satisfaction renewed among  
priests and populace.]*

Now I come down among you.

*[He descends.]*

Here's my breast.

Now strike who wills. Does any hesitate?

Why, such a blow as this none ever struck

That breathed since the beginning of the world ;

For he who strikes this breast, strikes at a  
city,

Who stabs at this my heart, stabs at a  
kingdom,

These veins are rivers, and these arteries  
Are very roads; this body is your country.

Strike—strike—strike! None of you?

*[Trumpet. Armed men appear at the  
back, filling the corridors and  
colonnade.]*

Lo then my spears  
That circle you about with no escape!  
I lift my finger and all ye are dead!

CROWD. *[Fawningly.]* O Herod!

HEROD. But I will not. Go!

*[To POLITICIANS.]* And you!

Remember with what gifts I come from Rome.

*[To PRIESTS.]* You to the task of building gird  
yourselves.

*[To MOB.]* And you, my people, now depart in  
peace,



[THEY come round him, some kneeling, kissing his garments, and gradually disperse. *Exeunt* MOB.]

SALOME.                 She hath denied you  
er lips, her love.

GADIAS. These things are not important.  
That which was

PHER. Brother, that this will cost you a fierce  
 pang

GADIAS. And quickly.

SALOME. Kill her ! kill her !

HEROD. Would you commit such beauty to  
the earth?

Those eyes that bring upon us endless thoughts!  
That face that seems as it had come to pass  
Like a thing prophesied! To kill her!  
And I, if she were dead, I too would die,  
Or linger in the sunlight without life;  
O, terrible to live but in remembering!  
To call her name down the long corridors;  
To come on jewels that she wore, laid by;  
Or open suddenly some chest, and see  
Some favourite robe she wore on such a day!  
I dare not bring upon myself such woe.

GADIAS. 'Tis not yourself, O king, it is the  
State.

PHER. It is our country that asks this of you.

HEROD. If it must be, then, here I sit in  
judgment!

*[Moves to throne and sits.]*

I call upon you, Mariamne, here  
To answer for yourself that you deny

All rights of marriage unto me your husband.

Answer.

CYPROS.                She will not.

SALOME.                        Cannot—rather say.

HEROD. Then for this poison of your own  
preparing.

SALOME. She cannot speak.

CYPROS.                        No answer still?

SALOME.                        You hear.

HEROD. Last, for this insurrection of your  
making,

You stir my people up against their king,

They break into the palace, and would have  
slain us.

GADIAS. This visiting so oft your brother's  
tomb

Has wrought the people up to mutiny.

MAR. I'll not forbear my visits to his  
tomb :

No, not though all Jerusalem went mad,

And pulled these pillars down upon our heads.

HEROD. Remember, I have power upon your  
life,

That I can sentence you to death.

MAR. O, that !

PHER. What further need of words ?

CYPROS. Or witnesses.

HEROD. Then as a traitor not alone to me,  
But to the State itself, you have incurred  
The pains of death.

MAR. I am ready.

CYPROS. Let her die.

GADIAS. King, she must die.

HEROD. Away from us a moment.

*[Exeunt all but MARIAMNE and*

HEROD. HEROD *beckons her*  
*down ; she comes before him.*

MAR. Herod, I cannot change—my love is  
dead.

HEROD. Die then yourself—die, die upon the  
instant.

Such beauty should pass suddenly away,

Such loveliness should vanish like the lightning :  
Die—die—

But ere you go, witness at least  
That never woman was so loved as thou,  
That never man from the beginning loved  
As I.

MAR. [*Moves down to him.*] And yet you  
left behind direction

That were you slain, that moment I should die.

HEROD. Here has imagination made me cruel,  
So that one death should end what is one life,  
And we two simultaneously cease :  
If cease we do, let's perish the same instant.  
Never could I decay while you still breathed,  
Nor could I rot while you moved in the light ;  
What grave could hold me fast? What  
sepulchre

Could so press on me that I would not rend it?  
Burn me in fire, and see me ashes, yet  
No lighted fire hath force upon this fire :  
Or did I live again, then should I float

All inarticulate and invisible  
About you still—mad to recover words—  
A spirit groping for the trick of speech,  
Mad for the ancient touches of the hand,  
Yet wordless, handless, helpless, near yet dumb,  
Close, yet unseen. This was the love I bore  
you.

MAR. A tiger's fury—not the love of man!

[*Turns to go.*]

HEROD. [*Moves up to steps.*] O stay yet!  
I forgive the love denied:  
See—I forgive the poison. I but crawl  
Here at your feet, and kiss your garments'  
hem,  
And I forgive this mutiny—all—all—  
But for one kiss from you, one touch, one word.  
O like a creature, I implore some look,  
Some syllable, some sign, ere I go mad.  
Mariamne! Mariamne! Mariamne!

[*MARIAMNE goes out without saying a  
word or looking round.*]



[*Throwing himself on steps.*] I am denied her  
soul, and that which was

A glow hath now become a wasting flame.

I am a barren, solitary pyre !

[*Takes ashes from brazier and strews  
them over his head.*]

*Enter* PHERORAS, GADIAS, CYPROS *and* SALOME.

PHER. I will give order for the execution.

CYPROS. Let her drink poison—die by that  
same death

Prepared for you.

[*PHERORAS is about to go up steps.*]

HEROD. Pheroras, and you others,

I'll not excuse her, but she had at least

Some provocation in that fierce command

I left behind that should I die, she too

Should perish.

[*SALOME exchanges look with CYPROS.*]

SALOME. And to whom did you confide

So intimate, so secret a command ?

Not to Gadias ?

GADIAS.                   No.

HEROD.                   Why, to Sohemus.

SOH. O, take me to the king.

*Enter, dying of wounds received in attack on  
palace.*

Forgive me, Herod.

[Dies.

HEROD. He was my friend !

CYPROS. Your friend ! And yet from him  
She learned the murder of Aristobulus ?

SALOME. But this command, so dear, so  
perilous,  
Would not be blurted out—'twas wrung from him.

HEROD. Impossible ! By torture ?

SALOME.                   No, perhaps  
By loveliness more terrible than torture—  
Slow sweetness with more exquisite a pang.

CYPROS. He was so true, no tortures could  
have shook him.

SALOME. Only in one way drew she this from  
him.

CYPROS. Know, son, that women the most  
delicate,  
And most high-born, feed often on strange  
fancies ;  
They are so screened, they come to long for  
peril,  
And we are secret, Herod—very secret.

SALOME. Thus only, Herod, lying on his  
breast,  
And gazing in his eyes, one arm about  
him,  
Could she have drawn him, swooning at her  
sweetness,  
To such betrayal—

HEROD. Like a fiend you hold me  
In an eternal torture.

SALOME. —Till he gave  
His soul up in the incense of her hair.

HEROD. [*Throwing SALOME from him.*] Devil!

CYPROS. And, Herod, not for the first time  
She hath languished for a soldier lowly born.

HEROD. Incredible! Unthinkable! And yet,  
O God! Sohemus' cry, 'Forgive me, Herod!'

CYPROS. A dying cry!

HEROD. [*Rushing to the body and kneeling.*]

Sohemus, speak—speak—speak!

Thou art not dead so long—art but a little  
The other side of the grave, and canst reveal—  
If not, let God then thunder through your  
lips—

He is dumb—and God himself is silent! Kill  
her!

GADIAS. He has said it!

CYPROS. O, at last! Let her drink poison—  
And on the instant.

GADIAS. Quickly, lest he change.

[*Exit SERVANT, quickly.*]

HEROD. I have said it! And it was foretold  
of me

That I should slay the thing that most I loved.  
Fate is upon me with the hour, the word.  
A dreadful numbness all my spirit seals.

Yet will I not be bound, I will break free,  
She shall not die—she shall not die—she shall  
not—

*Trumpets. Enter ATTENDANT.*

ATTEND. O king, the Roman eagles! See!

A CRY. [*Without.*] From Rome!

*Enter ROMAN ENVOY and SUITE.*

ENVOY. O king, great Cæsar sent us after  
you,

But, though we posted fast, you still outran us.  
Thus then by word of mouth great Cæsar greets  
Herod his friend. But he would not confine  
That friendship to the easy spoken word,  
And here I bear a proof of Cæsar's faith.  
Herein is added to thy boundaries  
Hippo, Samaria and Gadara,  
And high-walled Joppa, and Anthedon's shore,  
And Gaza unto these, and Straton's towers.

[*Moves down.*]

Here is the scroll, with Cæsar's own hand  
signed.

HEROD. [*Taking the scroll—at foot of steps.*]

Mariamne, hear you this? Mariamne, see you?

[*Turns to look at scroll.*]

SERVANT *enters and moves down to GADIAS*

*down L.*

[*He goes up the stairs.*]

Hippo, Samaria and Gadara,

And high-walled Joppa, and Anthedon's shore,

And Gaza unto these, and Straton's towers.

SERV. [*Aside to GADIAS.*] O sir, the queen is  
dead!

GADIAS. [*Aside to PHERORAS, CYPROS and  
SALOME.*] The queen is dead!

HEROD. Mariamne, hear you this? Mariamne,  
see you?

[*Repeating the words and going up steps.*]

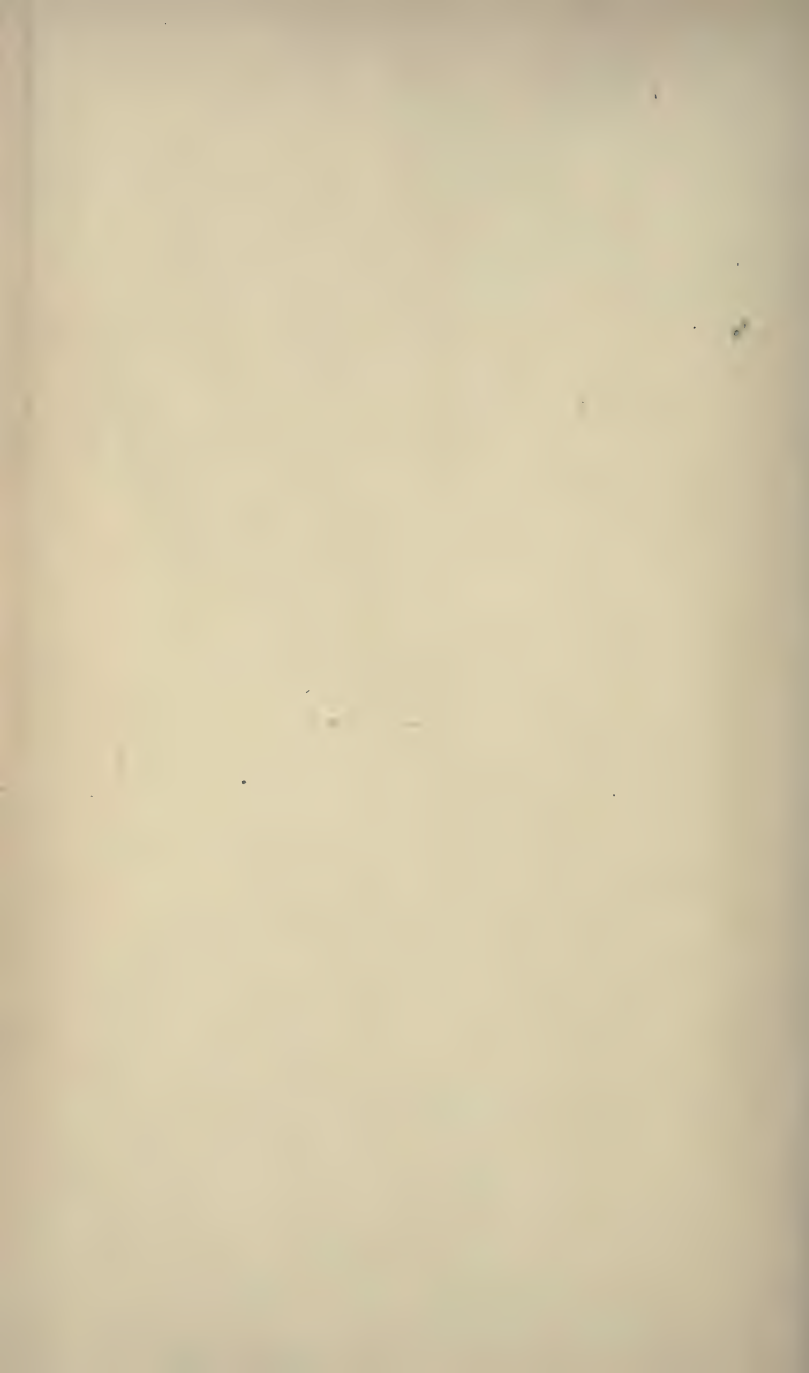
Hippo, Samaria and Gadara,

And high-walled Joppa, and Anthedon,

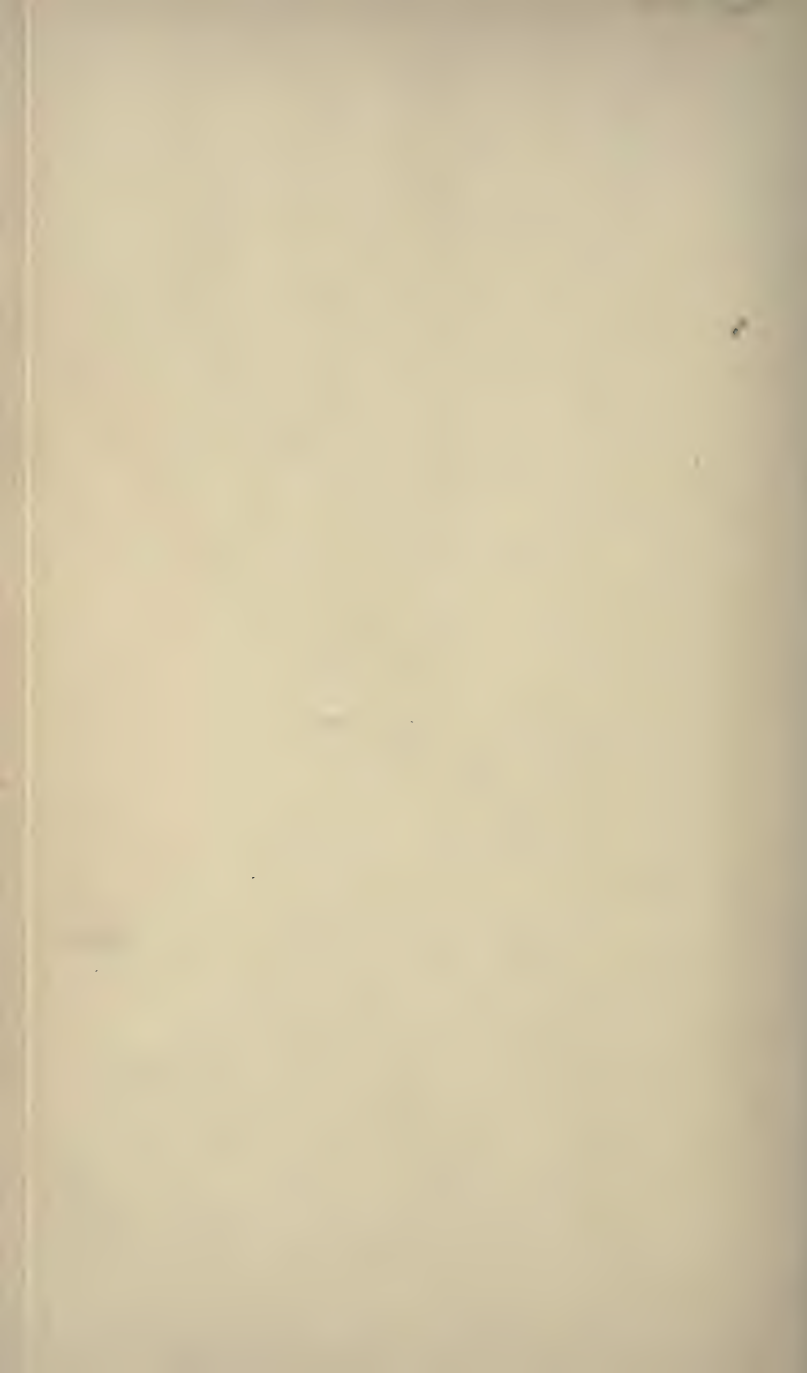
[*As he moves up.*]

And Gaza unto these, and Straton's towers!





### ACT III



SCENE.—*The Hall of Audience as before ; sunset.*

*The CHIEF CAPTAINS, COUNCILLORS and PRIESTS assembled, including GADIAS, a PHYSICIAN, CYPROS, etc. On one side of the throne stand PRIESTS, who are displaying ivory and marble and precious stones. On the other side are various ARCHITECTS and CHIEF MASONS, who are eagerly displaying charts and plans. As the Curtain rises there is the hum of many voices, but GADIAS rising to speak with uplifted hand, there is a sudden silence.*

GADIAS. Priests, councillors and captains  
nigh the throne,

Who are partakers of our private mind ;  
Long time, ye know, the melancholy king

Herod hath brooded by the Dead Sea wave  
Incapable of empire : but to-day  
Returns to grasp the reins of sovereignty.

[*A murmur of approbation.*

Priests, councillors and captains nigh the  
throne,

All Jewry on that single brain depends.

Herod alone defers the Roman doom,

That general fate whereto the world is born.

[*A low assenting murmur.*

That moment when the reason of the king

Shall tremble, trembles with it all this realm.

And now it seems that by the Dead Sea marge

Long since his mind had maddened, but for one

Idea with which he still doth rock himself.

[*A movement of surprise.*

Some fancy, all incredible to me,

But which alone diverts insanity,

And what this is, from the Physician hear !

PHYS. Councillors, priests, my business is to  
mend

The mind, not mingle with affairs of State.  
Now listen : though the embalméd queen is  
cold,

Yet from that irremediable thought  
The king's brain starts aside : such is his love  
He dares not to imagine she is dead.

[*A movement of astonishment.*

And in the wild foam of insanity  
He clasps this rock : that Mariamne lives.  
Once let her death rush in upon his brain,  
Madness will seize him !

PRIEST.                      And darkness the land.

GADIAS. Seeing the issue then how vast ;  
whate'er

You and myself may deem of this, our aim  
Must be to fend from him reality,  
And for as long as may be to conspire  
Against the idea of Mariamne's death.

PHYS. [*Pointing to* PRIESTS.] With ivory  
distract him and with gems!

Have music to avert some sudden rush,



And dancers to allure him from the truth.  
If he send messages unto the dead,  
Let messages be carried : if he ask  
An answer from the dead, be answer given.  
Only from one thought save him !

PRIEST.    And so save  
Your wives, your children, this beloved land  
From ruin and the nearing roar of Rome!

PHYS. Remember, if we can but bring him  
safe  
Through the sharp crisis of his malady;  
If for the first few hours of his return  
We can with music and with gems divert him  
From realising Mariamne's death,  
Then is there hope that he, with stealing time  
And reconciling lapse of quiet hours,  
May come to acquiesce and to submit  
To the dread fact of Mariamne's death.

*Enter* SALOME.

GADIAS. Princess Salome !

SALOME. Mother, he is coming.

We must be tender with him: this is left us.

[*She turns to Court.*

Councillors, priests, my brother now is coming.

When you shall see him—if there be of you

Any that envied or that hated him,

His face shall make you to forget your wrongs.

[*A movement of sympathy.*

I have been close to him by day, by night,

When he would dash him 'gainst Masada's  
walls

With piteous climbings; for it seemed to him

That he again was bearing off the queen.

I have been near him when like some wild beast

He turned upon himself as on some prey;

But me he loathes, and 'Mariamne' cries,

And 'Mariamne!' until I, who wrought

This ruin, would revive her if I might.

I would support—how gladly now!—her look,

Her high disdain, I would bow down to it,

Only to bring her in alive to him:

But he shall not be happy till he die.  
And now far more to see her face again,  
As he imagines, than to take up rule,  
He cometh hither.

PRIEST.

Hither?

SALOME.

Here he saw her  
Last; and he heard her speak for the last  
time.

O sirs, let him not rush in on her body  
Suddenly: but by every art divert him  
From realising that the queen is dead.

*[Murmurs are heard without.]*

GADIAS. He comes.

PHYS. Each man stand sentinel 'gainst truth,  
And watch the gates against reality!

A CRY. The king!

*[Nearer.]* The king!

*[Near the throne.]* The king!

THE COURT.

Herod, all hail!

*Enter HEROD, unkempt and in ragged apparel.*

*He slowly ascends the throne and sits in it.*

GADIAS. O king, restore to us that mastering  
brain,

That grappling will, those disentangling hands.

THE COURT. Herod, Herod!

HEROD. The business now?

GADIAS. O king!

Since thou wast sitting where thou sittest now,

A pestilence hath fallen upon the land,

Then famine! And the realm is filled with  
bones.

What should we do? Where's succour and  
where hope?

To me it seemed—

HEROD. Import from Egypt grain!

And I myself out of my private purse

Will fifty thousand of my subjects feed.

Dispatch to Egypt!

COUNCILLOR. The king's mind is clear

Still, there is hope.

HEROD. This is the hour—is't not?—when  
Mariamne—

GADIAS. [*Interrupting.*] Lo! the chief builders,  
masons, engineers,  
Who make at thy command the sea-coast ring  
From Gaza northward unto Cæsarea.

CHIEF BUILDER. O king, since thou wast sick  
all idle stands  
In scaffolded and roofless interruption,  
An unborn desolation of blank stone,  
Bird-haunted as a dead metropolis.

HEROD. I will create a city of my own;  
And therefore with sea-thwarting bastions  
And mighty moles will make impregnable  
That beach where Cæsarea shall arise.

[*He passes his hand over his brow.*  
How easy this! Yet against flooding thoughts—  
[*Turns to the Court.*

Well, well, a harbour then for every nation,  
Whereon shall ride the navies of the world.  
There vessels from the sunset shall unlade;  
The harbour one vast bosom shall become  
For towering galleons of the ocean weary;

For driven things a place of rest. Rest—  
rest—

How easy this—yet for the driven mind!

[*Suddenly.*] Go, tell the queen that I would  
speak to her.

[*A general movement.*

She knows not yet I am returned?

GADIAS.

O king!

Not yet!

HEROD. Then tell her I would speak to her.

[*An ATTENDANT starts to go.*

Come hither you! I will not have her vexed,  
Nor troubled to come; perchance she is asleep,  
Asleep—then rouse her not—you understand.  
I'll wait her waking.

[*Exit ATTENDANT.*

[*HEROD turns to the Court.*

This then is my design.

And now that in my coffers 'gins to pour  
Pearl of barbaric kings and savage gold,  
And emeralds of Indian emperors,



And wafted ivory in silent night,  
And floated marble in the moonbeams, now  
That the green waves are glooming pearls for  
me,

And metals cry to me to be delivered,  
And screened jewels wait like brides, I'll  
have

No stint—no waiting on how much, how far—

[GADIAS *beckons* CHIEF ARTIFICER.

You understand?

CHIEF A. O king, even now the city  
Seems rising as by incantation!  
Each dawn new roofs shall dazzle, sudden  
towers

And masonry in morning magical.

HEROD. Hence to the coast! And every  
hour dispatch

New messengers of rising domes and halls,  
And terraces of bloom and blowing gardens,  
Or some repulse of the invading sea!

CHIEF A. O king! it shall be done.

HEROD. Dismiss them. Where

*[Exeunt ARTIFICERS, etc.]*

Is he I sent in to the queen—how long?

A PRIEST. Lo! those whom thou hast caused  
to build the Temple,

The chief artificers in gold and silver,

Marble and porphyry and red pumice-stone,

Trimmers of jewel sparks—

HEROD. Pour out those pearls,

And give me in my hand that bar of gold.

*[Rises.]*

I heard an angel crying from the Sun,

*[Court listen intently.]*

For glory, for more glory on the earth;

And here I'll build the wonder of the world.

I have conceived a Temple that shall stand

Up in such splendour that men bright  
from it

Shall pass with a light glance the pyramids.

I'll have—

*Re-enter ATTENDANT.*



I say—you saw—her bosom stirred?

ATTEND.

I saw—

HEROD. You saw! It is enough!

[*To Court.*]

Bear with me—oh!

I dreamed last night of a dome of beaten gold

To be a counter-glory to the Sun.

There shall the eagle blindly dash himself,

There the first beam shall strike, and there the

moon

Shall aim all night her argent archery;

And it shall be the tryst of sundered stars,

The haunt of dead and dreaming Solomon;

Shall send a light upon the lost in Hell,

And flashings upon faces without hope—

[*Murmur of sympathy.*]

And I will think in gold and dream in silver,

Imagine in marble and in bronze conceive,

Till it shall dazzle pilgrim nations

And stammering tribes from undiscovered lands,

Allure the living God out of the bliss,

And all the streaming seraphim from heaven.

[HEROD *looks at door and sits.*

[*A murmur of admiration.*

That bag of emeralds give it to me—so :  
And yonder sack of rubies ; I will gaze  
On glittering things.

[*Sits listlessly, hands down.*

Let one of you go forth  
And rouse the queen—not roughly be it done—  
But rouse her ! I would have her waked from  
sleep.

[*A general embarrassment.*

Why linger you ? Is it not easy ? Go you,  
Bathsheba, child, and touch her gently—thus.  
There is no haste for her to come—I am  
Not over-eager, and will wait—but rouse her !  
Rouse her—or—go !

[*Exit BATHSHEBA in lingering terror.*

HEROD *again turns to the Court.*

Now, sirs, unceasingly  
Let all the sounds of building rise to me  
By day, by night—and now let anvils clang,

Melodious axes ring through Lebanon,  
Masons let me behold so far aloft  
They crawl like flies, ant-like artificers,  
Swarming with tiny loads, and labourers  
Hither and thither murmuring like bees.  
Away with inspiration of these words!

[*Exeunt* CHIEF ARTIFICERS.]

Is Bathsheba returned? 'Tis a light task  
To rouse a sleeping woman, to awake her.  
'Tis all I ask: I'd not compel her here;  
I do not ask things out of reason—only  
To know that she is waked—to know—to know.

*Re-enter* BATHSHEBA, *who whispers to* GADIAS.

GADIAS. O king, the queen is waked!

HEROD. 'Tis all I ask.

I am not o'er-impatient. Bathsheba,

[BATHSHEBA *goes trembling up to the*

KING.

Knows she as yet I am returned?

BATH.

O king,

I—I—



HEROD. [*Quickly.*] Ah, yes! Speak not—no,  
speak not, child,  
I understand—she has learned it. Bathsheba,  
Speak low now, said she anything?

BATH. O king,  
I—I—

HEROD. No matter. No, repeat it not!  
I can so well imagine those first words.  
But, child, you heard her speak? I ask no more,  
You heard the sound of spoken words?

BATH. O king—

HEROD. You heard her—yes—it is enough;  
but I—

SALOME. Lo! the musicians whom you did  
command—

HEROD. Touch me not—sister—ah!

SALOME. Forgive me, brother.

*Enter* MUSICIANS.

HEROD. Music, O music! Now create a land  
From lovely chords, that land where we would be;  
Where life no longer jars, nor jolts, but glides;

The end may recompense us, but meantime

[*Rises and looks at door.*] Too bare, O God, too  
bare thy universe!

I am so hurt that the half-light seems good

There should be veils between us and the sun.

[*Music.*

Or why not ever moonlight, ever the moon

With bathing and obliterating beauty?

Now introduce with melody a life

Which we can live, where there is no farewell,

Nor any death, but—

[*He looks towards the door again, rises  
and sits again.*

SALOME. Listen, brother, listen.

[*They play soft music before the KING ;  
after a while he starts up, he is  
soothed for a moment.*

HEROD. Bathsheba, go again and ask the  
queen

To come to me.

[*A movement and murmur.*

I am not mad! Look not  
So wildly!

[HEROD *rises. Music stops.*

HEROD. Say to her I have been patient,  
I have been very patient. [*Moves down.*] Ask  
of her.

That for the sake of that one night when I,  
[*Taking BATHSHEBA by the arm.*  
Catching her thus, burst thro' the robber swords,  
And she feared not, but looked up in my eyes,  
That she will come to me when she hath  
robed.

[*Beating his hands gently together.*

But oh, oh, she must come!

PHYS. O king, the minstrel  
That singeth to the dulcimer—

HEROD. [*Puts the PHYSICIAN aside.*]

[*To BATHSHEBA.*] Say to her  
I have guessed sweet messages, fond brevities,  
But you, so young, know that the sight is  
much.

GADIAS. Go, child, and bid the queen to robe  
and come.

HEROD. I have been very patient.

SALOME. Lo, the minstrel !

O listen, brother, listen.

*[The BOY sings to a dulcimer, but as  
the last notes die away, the KING  
rises slowly.]*

HEROD. I have a fear !

GADIAS. Will you not make, O king,  
Some gift to the sweet singer ?

HEROD. Take this ruby.

*Re-enter BATHSHEBA, who whispers to GADIAS.*

Ah, she will come ?

GADIAS. The queen but waits to robe her  
And she will come.

HEROD. *[Sits.]* Why doth the child for ever  
Pour in your ear the tale which you repeat ?  
And you, Gadias, think you not the king  
That is to come, might with pure gentleness  
Found such a kingdom as no sword could make ?

GADIAS. O king, a folly !

HEROD. Is it—is it? Ah !

The queen! She comes not yet—and oh,  
Gadiaz—

Oh, if she cannot come !

GADIAS Cannot !

HEROD. I say

Cannot ! She would—she hath forgiven all.  
Yet cannot traverse with her feet those yards  
That separate us. If she would—but cannot !  
I tell you we are fooled by the eye, the ear,  
These organs muffle us from that real world  
That lies about us, we are duped by brightness.  
The ear, the eye doth make us deaf and  
blind ;  
Else should we be aware of all our dead,  
Who pass above us, through us and beneath  
us.

[*Recovering.*

O little Bathsheba [*She moves down.*], how  
beautiful

You seem—for you have twice gone in to her  
And twice come back. I have a fear.

[*Rises wildly.*]

PHYS.

O king !

*Enter at a sign from PHYSICIAN a troop of DANCING GIRLS who perform a slow, elaborate dance ; but at its height, and when the movements are growing furious, suddenly the KING is seen in the midst, unkempt, ragged, and scattering the DANCERS.*

HEROD. Mariamne !

GADIAS. [*To PHYSICIAN.*] Now, what's best ?  
Quickly devise.

HEROD. Mariamne ! Mariamne !

A COUNCILLOR. [*To PHYSICIAN.*] Now  
Judæa

Hangs on thy wit.

PHYS. Myself am crazed almost.



HEROD. Mariamne, Mariamne, Mariamne,  
Come, come!

*[He rushes up the gallery to the door, at which he casts himself, sinking exhausted on steps. Amid the consternation, BATHSHEBA goes up, and taking his hand, leads him gently down like a child until he again sits on the throne.]*

CYPROS. *[Placing her hands on his shoulders.]*

My child,

I bore thee 'neath a wild moon by the sea.

*[HEROD puts CYPROS'S hands gently away.]*

GADIAS. O Herod, thou art royal, rise and reign.

HEROD. *[Recovering himself.]* I had forgotten!

I am still a king!

Bring me my crown, and set it on my head.

*[GADIAS puts his crown on his head.]*

GADIAS. All hail! all hail! Herod, king of  
the Jews!

*[Court repeat the cries.]*

HEROD. Bring forth the purple robe and vest me in it.

[CUP-BEARER *brings his robe. They crown and robe him.*]

Summon the queen, and on the instant : I'll  
Not tarry for long robe or ornament.  
Councillors, captains, priests ! Is there delay ?  
Look on me and look well ! Am I that Herod  
That ere the beard was on me, burned up  
cities,

That fired the robbers out of Galilee ?  
That shook the Parthian and left him dead,  
Blew like a blast away the Arabian,  
Who grappled to my side great Antony,  
And after bound Augustus as my friend ?

THE COURT. Herod, Herod, Herod !

HEROD. [*Through murmur.*] Am I that Herod  
Who builded yonder amphitheatre  
Rivalling Rome ? who lured into these ports  
Wealth of the world, a Temple have conceived  
That shall dispyramid the Egyptian kings ?

That so have lived, wrought, suffered, battled,  
loved ?

I have outspanned life and the worm of God,  
Imagining I am already dead

Begins to prey on me. Am I that Herod ?

[*Cries of 'HEROD, HEROD, HEROD !'*

Then on the instant let the queen be brought.

I'll see her with my eyes in flesh and blood ;

Oh, nothing yet hath stopped me : to my  
will

No limit hath been set. Summon the queen,

Or I will call not earthly vengeance down.

I have exhausted earth, I'll fetch the  
lightning

And call on thunder like an emperor !

[*Moves down.*

And henceforth I discard Augustus's aid ;

I'll bribe Jehovah as my new ally,

Flatter the Holy One to be my friend—

I'll—I'll—I'll—

[*Falls back into PHYSICIAN'S arms.*

If you would avert a doom  
Unheard, unthinkable—summon the queen !

PHYS. There is no other way.

GADIAS. [*To ATTENDANT.*] You then go forth  
And bring the queen with ceremony in.

[*Exeunt ATTENDANTS. After a pause*

HEROD *again starts up.*

HEROD [*Standing.*] Why, if I am denied  
the sight of her,

If there hath been mischance to her—I say not  
There hath been—yet so fineless is my will,  
I'll recreate her out of endless yearning,  
And flesh shall cleave to bone, and blood shall run.  
Do I not know her, every vein ? Can I  
Not imitate in furious ecstasy  
What God hath coldly made ? I'll re-create  
My love with bone for bone and vein for vein.  
The eyes, the eyes again, the hands, the hair,  
And that which I have made, O that shall  
love me.

[*With arms extended towards door, he  
throws himself on throne. He*

*buries his head in anguish. Steps are heard and the embalmed QUEEN is carried in and laid at the foot of the throne. There is a pause of pained expectancy. HEROD slowly raises his face and descends. He touches her on the forehead and stands suddenly rigid with a fixed and vacant stare.*

PHYS. He is stricken, and in catalepsy bound.

*[Trumpets are heard.*

A CRY. From Rome, from Rome, way for the  
messengers

From Rome; on Cæsar's business. Make a path  
For Cæsar envoys! Way there!

*Knock. Enter ENVOYS, who make obeisance  
to HEROD.*

FIRST E. Cæsar, O king,  
Confers on thee the kingdom of Arabia,  
On thee and on thy heirs. What Herod's sword  
Hath won, let Herod's wisdom pacify!  
'Tis Cæsar's pleasure; and with this he sends

A sceptre all inlaid with western gems,  
The symbol of this added sovereignty.

[HEROD *remains motionless.*

GADIAS. The king is stricken, and can stir  
not, sirs.

FIRST E. O thou Judæa ! O thou frozen land !

SECOND E. O thou mute East !

THIRD E. Motionless Orient !

THE COURT. All hail, O hail, Herod ! Herod,  
all hail !

SALOME. [*To* PHYSICIAN] O lives there any  
hope for him at last ?

PHYS. Rest, and a world of leaves, and  
stealing stream

Or solemn swoon of music may allure  
Homeward the ranging spirit of the king.  
These things avail : but these things are of man.  
To me indeed it seems, who with dim eyes  
Behold this Herod motionless and mute,  
To me it seems that they who grasp the world,  
The kingdom and the power and the glory,  
Must pay with deepest misery of spirit,



Atoning unto God for a brief brightness,  
And ever ransom, like this rigid king,  
The outward victory with inward loss.

CH. PRIEST. Now unto Him who brought His  
people forth  
Out of the wilderness, by day a cloud,  
By night a pillar of fire ; to Him alone,  
Look we at last and to no other look we.

*[Slowly and silently the whole Court  
melt away, one or two coming and  
looking on the KING, then departing.  
HEROD is left alone by the litter,  
standing motionless. The curtain  
descends : then rises, and it is  
night, with a few stars It descends,  
and again rises, and now it is  
the glimmer of dawn which falls  
upon HEROD and MARIAMNE, he  
still standing rigid and with fixed  
stare in the cataleptic trance.]*

THE END.

# Herod

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